Approved For Release 2004/06/14 : CIA-RDP80M01133A000600200016-4

DCI/IC 75-3157
17 November 1975

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence

SUBJECT : Statement on "Distortion" of Intelligence to Serve Policy Purposes

1. When you reviewed the Action Plan Task Force paper which responded to the allegation that intelligence is "distorted" for policy purposes you returned a note on 10 November requesting a draft statement on the subject which you could include in a wrap-up opening statement.

2. Attached is such a draft statement, prepared by [redacted] STAT the NIO representative on the task group. STAT

/s/ Samuel V. Wilson

Samuel V. Wilson
Lieutenant General, USA
Deputy to the DCI for the
Intelligence Community

Attachment:
As stated

Distribution:
Orig. - Addressee (w/att)
1 - DDCI(w/o att)
1 - ER (w/att)
1 - D/DCI/IC(w/att)
1 - [redacted] (w/o att) STAT
2 - ICS/CS Chrons (w/o att)
1 - IC Registry (w/att)
1 - DCI/ICS/CS/[redacted] STAT
(17 November 1975)

STAT

Approved For Release 2004/06/14 : CIA-RDP80M01133A000600200016-4

SECRET
Approved For Release 2004/06/14 : CIA-RDP80M01133A000600200016-4

17 November 1975

RESPONSE TO CHARGES ABOUT "DISTORTION" OF INTELLIGENCE FOR POLICY PURPOSES

Allegations that CIA intelligence has been distorted to suit particular policies or policymakers are substantially untrue.

For one thing, there have been remarkably few attempts from the policy side over the years to dictate intelligence judgments. And the few times such has been tried, it has been resisted.

At worst, on a few occasions, some sharp debate between intelligence officers and those on the policy side over contentious issues has led to solutions which satisfied no one entirely, but were as good as could be arrived at given the then-current state of information.

Even those who believe the most serious charges levied against the intelligence system (by Sam Adams, for example) have to acknowledge that the process gave the dissident view a hearing, right up to the top.

The single most important reason for this record is people. Most professional intelligence officers know (or soon learn) that credibility is their most precious stock in trade, and most policy officials come to appreciate this and to live with it. Those on either side who do not soon become discounted by their colleagues. If these intrinsic disciplines are ever weakened in the profession, no amount

25X1

Approved For Release 2004/06/14 : CIA-RDP80M01133A000600200016-4

Approved For Release 2004/06/14 : CIA-RDP80M01133A000600200016-4

of institutional tinkering could guarantee objectivity; and if this self-regulating spirit remains strong, almost any reasonable institutional system can produce objective intelligence. Thus, the overriding need for intelligence is to have competent and dedicated professionals, and CIA has these aplenty.

These people can be helped by procedural and bureaucratic safeguards. A number of such institutional arrangements have been used over the years. For example:

a. The process of coordination of national intelligence carried with it not merely the right but the obligation of dissent. Time and again, National Intelligence Estimates and similar assessments have recorded differences of judgment on particular issues or broad points of view. The vast majority of these have been honest, legitimate differences of opinion on the evidence. A small number have been designed to support particular policies. These have been few and far between, they stand on the record for all to see, and they fooled no one at the time or since. The process which encourages and even requires dissents thus serves not only as a hedge against enforced conformity, but also forces both the majority and minority to lay their views on the line, identified as such, with supporting evidence and rationale. This is a good inducement to responsibility--not only in terms

Approved For Release 2004/06/14 : CIA-RDP80M01133A000600200016-4

Approved For Release 2004/06/14 : CIA-RDP80M01133A000600200016-4

of the formal written product, but in terms of an analytical process which washes out the shoddy, holding up to the light of discussion and debate any special pleading or policy hard-sell.

b. Another form of self-policing or quality control is frequent reviews of past performance. CIA and the Community have engaged in many retrospective assessments, post mortems of various kinds in which the record is weighed in hindsight for, among other things, conscious or unconscious policy biases. Indeed, the Intelligence Community probably does more of this than any other area of Government operations.

c. An active dialogue with scholars from the academic community and other sources of expertise is carried on by all production officers in CIA, State/INR and DIA. This program assures that perceptions and insights of both specialists and generalists from outside are brought both to review past production and to suggest further approaches. In a reverse flow, all the intelligence agencies have active programs for sending their own personnel occasionally to academic centers for further training.

When all this has been said, the question of objectivity in intelligence must be discussed with certain realistic considerations in mind.

Approved For Release 2004/06/14 : CIA-RDP80M01133A000600200016-4

Approved For Release 2004/06/14 : CIA-RDP80M01133A000600200016-4

a. First, intelligence is not prepared in an ivory tower and is not prepared primarily to provide the stuff of post mortems. It is prepared in the real world for the real use of real policymakers. It is also prepared constantly--daily, weekly, monthly, and yearly--from a stream of incomplete, fragmentary, and often conflicting evidence. It must try to provide answers--repertorial, analytical or estimative--to tough questions, the answers to which are sometimes known only to a few leaders in closed societies, and sometimes are literally unknowable to anyone anywhere at the time of writing.

b. Secondly, it must help the policy officer make intelligent choices. If it tells him only what he wants to hear, it fails. But if it addresses only irrelevant or easy questions, or the right questions at the wrong time, it loses in usefulness whatever it might gain in a kind of accuracy.

c. Thirdly, the more important the question, especially in areas where knowledge is incomplete, the more closely and critically will decision makers look at intelligence reports and estimates. And while it may be argued that here is where pressures to distort or suppress are most likely to arise, it is also true that precisely here is where competent professionals

Approved For Release 2004/06/14 : CIA-RDP80M01133A000600200016-4

Approved For Release 2004/06/14 : CIA-RDP80M01133A000600200016-4

will be most jealous of their credibility. If they are unable to stick to objective standards in dialogue with the policy side, they do not belong in the profession and will probably soon learn or be told as much.

d. Finally, unless there is effective communication between policy and intelligence, the one will be ill-informed and the other academic. Close communication between them inevitably produces some tensions, some clashes of perspective, some divergences of aim. Policy makers have objectives and preferences, and it is only human of them to value what helps them toward their goals and to be irritated at what hinders them. Presidential memoirs and many contemporary documents allude often to the inconvenient voice of intelligence getting in the way of what leaders wanted to do. Sometimes intelligence prevailed, sometimes it was overridden by other considerations. Intelligence is, after all, one important input to decision-making, but it is not the only one.

CIA and the Intelligence Community have learned, over the years, that they cannot compel national leaders to "read, mark, learn and inwardly digest" every pronouncement of intelligence. These leaders are their own men, possessed of powers and seized of problems in operational situations, often having to factor into their decisions

Approved For Release 2004/06/14 : CIA-RDP80M01133A000600200016-4

SECRET
Approved For Release 2004/06/14 : CIA-RDP80M01133A000600200016-4

matters which are well beyond the province of foreign intelligence. But intelligence does have a right to be heard, and this right has been observed over 25 or more years. Policy makers cannot be forced to heed intelligence but we and they know that they can ignore it only at their peril. In the last analysis, we cannot hope for more.

Approved For Release 2004/06/14 : CIA-RDP80M01133A000600200016-4
SECRET